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TAGS: [ETRD](#) [MY](#) [PREL](#) [RP](#) [TH](#) [ASEAN](#) [EXBS](#)  
SUBJECT: DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE MEETING WITH THAI FM  
NITYA PIBULSONGGRAM

Classified By: Deputy Secretary Negroponte, reasons 1.4 c, d

11. (C) SUMMARY: Deputy Secretary Negroponte encouraged Thailand to return to democracy by holding national elections by the end of 2007 as intended, during an August 1 meeting with Thai Foreign Affairs Minister Nitya Pibulsonggram on in Manila, site of this year's ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). Nitya confirmed elections will be held December 16 and described the civil unrest in the South. End Summary.

ON A CONSISTENT PATH BUT WITH SOME SETBACKS  
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12. (C) The Deputy Secretary stated that the U.S. is concerned about Thailand's return to democracy. Foreign Minister Nitya Pibulsonggram reported that his administration is "on track" and moving steadily towards holding national elections on December 16. He regretted that the government would not be able to meet the initial deadline of November 25 due to technical difficulties with establishing enabling legislation. FM Nitya repeatedly mentioned government attempts to restore democracy, and the setbacks encountered, but averred that the Thai authorities "always come back" with a steadfast resolve to ensure democratic governance.

NOT ALL COUPS ARE THE SAME  
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13. (C) Deputy Secretary Negroponte underscored the need for rule of law, and inquired about treatment of Thai citizens in the period following the coup. FM Nitya responded that they are treated as well or even better now. The coup was a very unique "intervention," with no bloodshed, no bullets and no political prisoners. Since the coup, the Thai administration had spent 8 months compiling evidence against those who moved against the previous administration. He noted that there are 55 cases pending and currently being processed through a Counter-corruption Committee. FM Nitya asserted that there will be criminal indictments of those found guilty of misdemeanors. Nitya stated that the Thaksin administration would have been very damaging to the nation's interest had they continued for five more years. He alluded to massive electoral fraud within Thaksin's party. Nitya also indicated that the current administration has made a lot of progress to organize the forthcoming elections, and that a few parties have been abolished. He stated that the Thai military have behaved "impeccably," passing on the baton to the civilian administration in the immediate aftermath of the coup, and that General Sirayudh's membership on the Privy Council confirms the military's tactics as being above board. However, they are facing difficult decisions on how to establish the rule of law and constitution with safeguards, and how to prevent abuses of such safeguards. Nitya suggested that international diplomatic circles should not jump to conclusions about Thailand's situation and that nothing is in black and white. He said August 19th would be

a difficult day, when a national referendum for a new constitution-- expected to pass-- would be held. This was Thailand's first experience with such a process. Nitya speculated that 50 percent turnout would be an optimistic scenario and noted his concern about the legitimacy of the new constitution. The Deputy Secretary inquired if there would be an educational campaign that informs the public about the forthcoming referendum. Nitya responded that there is a huge effort reaching out to provinces.

#### THE TROUBLED SOUTH

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15. (C) Nitya insisted that there is no Al-Qaeda presence in the South. They are in communication with the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) and have communicated to the Arab world about the administration's attempts to ensure peace and security in Southern Thailand. He alluded to extrajudicial actions of Thaksin's regime, exacerbated by the "religious dimension." He brought up the issue that 30 percent of the workforce in the jewelry industry is from the South and that they would be disadvantaged now that the U.S. had taken away the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) status of gold jewelry from Thailand. The U.S. delegation responded that the GSP decision was because of Thailand's major strides made in becoming globally competitive in this industry. Nitya mentioned good progress in cultivating relations with Malaysia, which has a key role in the situation in the South.

He indicated that Thaksin's administration had created a rift by alienating the Malaysian Government but that his government has now repaired much of the damage. The Prime Ministers of both countries met earlier this year, and tasked their respective Foreign Ministers to resolve the issues in Southern Thailand. Nitya described their strategy as three

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"E"s: Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship to enhance competitiveness and investment opportunities for the region. FM Nitya mentioned that Thailand has excellent relations with Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Finally, he raised the issue of propaganda abroad that criticizes Thai government management of the situation in the South, referring to an organization based in Stockholm called Pattani United Liberation Organization (PULO).

16. (C) FM Nitya expressed hope that at upcoming APEC meetings President Bush would meet with Thailand's Prime Minister, whom he referred to as "a professional soldier and a very upright individual." The Deputy Secretary and Foreign Minister referred to the long years of friendship between the two nations, as well as the historical ties, and said that they would maintain efforts to keep communication lines open.

17. (U) August 1, 2007; 1640-1710; Manila, Philippines

18. (U) Meeting Participants:

#### Thailand

Foreign Minister Nitya Pibulsonggram  
Norachit Sinhaseni, Deputy Permanent Secretary, MFA  
Nongnuth Phetcharatana, DG, Department of American and South Pacific Affairs, MFA  
Piriya Khempol, Deputy Director-General, Department of Information, MFA  
Arthayudh Srisamoot, Deputy Director-General, Department of ASEAN Affairs, MFA  
Nopporn Adchariyavanich, Director, Department of ASEAN Affairs, MFA

#### U.S.

Deputy Secretary John Negroponte  
Kaye Lee, Special Assistant to the Deputy Secretary of State  
Ted Wittenstein, Assistant to the Deputy Secretary of State  
Aye Aye Thwin, Notetaker

Adam Scarlatelli, Notetaker  
KENNEY